

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TUNIS 01810 01 OF 02 031807 Z

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ACTION AID-59

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FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1387

INFO COMSIXTHFLT

USCINCEUR

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CINCUSAFE ADVON RAMSTEIN AB GER

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 TUNIS 1810

AIDAC FOR DISASTER RELIEF COORDINATOR

E. O. 11652: N/ A

TAGS: SWEL, TS

SUBJECT: DISASTER RELIEF TUNISIA

1. SUMMARY: RECENTLY RETURNED USAID DIRECTOR GERARD AND TEAM, INCLUDING BY USAID INVITATION U. N. RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE BLICKENSTAFF, CONDUCTED TWO (2) HOUR AERIAL RECONNAISSANCE APRIL 2 TO ASSESS CURRENT STATE FLOOD DAMAGED MEDJERDA RIVER VALLEY. OVERFLIGHT EXTENDED FROM RIVER MOUTH TO JENDOUBA. FUEL RESTRICTIONS PREVENTED PROCEEDING TO FARTHEST REACHEST UPPER VALLEY. UNABLE TO SURVEY SILIANA, LE KEF, KASSERINE WHERE DAMAGE ALSO REPORTED. FORTUNATELY FLOOD AND FLOOD- RELATED DAMAGE WROUGHT ALONG EITHER SIDE MEDJERDA RIVER IS LESS THAN ESTIMATED AT OUTSET.
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PAGE 02 TUNIS 01810 01 OF 02 031807 Z

2. CONFIRM EARLIER ASSESSMENT MOST SERIOUS DAMAGE OCCURRED LOWER VALLEY AREA, PARTICULARLY RIVER DELTA ZONE OF APPROXIMATELY 475 SQ./ FM. 40-50 PERCENT THIS ZONE REMAINS FLOODED. ROUGH BOUNDARIES DELIMITING EXTENSIVELY INUNDATED AREA EXTEND ALONG LINE UTIQUE, TEBOURBA, MEDJEZ EL BAB, DJEDEIDA, LA CEBALA BEN AMMAR. BELOW DJEDEIDA FLOOD PLAIN BROADENS TO APPROXIMATELY 4-5 KILOMETERS EITHER SIDE OF RIVER. RIVER DIKES BREACHED IN MAY SPOTS. EXPECTEDLY, LAND IN DELTA IS GENERALLY LOW- LYING, FLOOD- PRONE, WITH HIGH MOISTURE CONTENT AND NOT CONSIDERED TO BE PRIME AGRICULTURE AREA.

3. UPSTREAM FRO DJEDEIDA WATERS ON THE WHOLE HAVE RECEDED AND RIVER WATER PRESENTLY RESTRICTED TO CHANNEL. DAMAGE IN MIDDLE AND UPPER VALLEY LIMITED ESSENTIALLY TO 1-2 KILOMETER WIDE FLOOD PLAIN EXCEPT IN AREAS SURROUNDING TEBOURBA/ EL BATHAN, MEDJEZ EL BAB, BOU SALEM AND JENDOUBA. WOULD ESTIMATE 165 SQ./ KM. STILL UNDER WATER OR HEAVY SILT. CROP DAMAGE VARIES IN GRAVITY ALONG THE MIDDLE AND UPPER RIVER FLOOD PLAINS BUT INVARIABLY IS MOST EXTENSIVE ON LAND CONTAINED BY RIVER MEANDERS WHERE DAMAGE APPROACHES 100 PERCENT.

4. PHYSICAL DAMAGE - WHILE STRUCTURES WERE MORE VISIBLE THAN DURING EARLIER FLIGHTS, IT WAS STILL DIFFICULT TO ASSESS ACCURATELY FROM THE AIR THE EXTENT OF INTERNAL DAMAGE. NUMBERS OF DESTROYED AND PARTIALLY DESTROYED GHORBIS (DRY MUD HOUSES) REMAIN ABOUT THE SAME AS REPORTED SITREP NO. 5, ALTHOUGH GOT REPORTING MUCH HIGHER FIGURE. BUILDINGS AND MASONRY HOMES WITH SOME EXCEPTIONS APPEARED TO SUFFER ONLY FROM HIGH WATER DAMAGE, AND THIS WAS LIMITED TO AREAS WITHIN ONE (1) KILOMETER OF THE RIVER. MEDJEZ EL BAB, TOBOURBA, EL BATHAN AND DJEDEIDA WERE THE MOST AFFECTED IN THIS REGARD. BETWEEN VILLAGES OF OUED ZARGA AND BOU SALEM WHERE RAILROAD PARALLELS MEDJERDA RIVER THREE (3) BRIDGES SUBSTANTIALLY DAMAGED AND ROADBED WASHED OUT IN SEVERAL LOCATIONS. APPROACHES ON TWO VEHICULAR BRIDGES ALSO WASHED OUT. ROAD DAMAGE ITSELF VARIES LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 TUNIS 01810 01 OF 02 031807 Z

DEPENDING ON LOCATION AND COMPOSITION OF THE ROAD.

MOST WIDESPREAD DAMAGE TO BOTH PRIMARY (TARMAC) AND SECONDARY (GRAVEL) ROADS OCCURRED IN DELTA REGION BELOW DJEDEIDA. MANY OF THESE REMAIN AWASH AND INACCESSIBLE TO INSPECTION. INTERMITTENT DAMAGE OF VARYING SEVERITY OCCURRED ON THE MAIN ROUTE FOR ONE (1) MKILOMETER WEST OF MEDJEZ EL BAB AND BETWEEN BOU SALEM AND JENDOUBA. THE LATTER ROUTE, WHILE DAMAGED, IS NOW IN USE. SILT/MUD ACCUMMULATIONS ARE CONSIDERABLY MORE FAR- REACHING AND WILL REQUIRE WEEKS IF NOT MONTHS TO CLEAR. THREE (3) BROADCASTING ANTENNAS IN DJEDEIDA APPEAR DAMAGE- FREE WHILE EQUIPMENT BUILDINGS INUNDATED. UNDOUBTEDLY SUBSTANTIAL AMMOUNTS OF FARM EQUIPMENT SUSTAINED DAMAGE WHICH WILL CAUSE CONCERN AS THE HARVEST SEASON APPROACHES.

IRRIGATION INFRASTRUCTURE SUFFERED MODERATE DAMAGE. MANY PRECAST, ABOVE- GROUND SECTIONS OF CONCRETE CANALS WERE EITHER SWEEPED AWAY OR COLLAPSED BY FAST- MOVING WATER. SOME SIPHONS RUNNING UNDER ROADS AND DITCHES CLOGGED WITH SILT. MOST OF THIS DAMAGE RESTRICTED TO LOWER VALLEY AREA. SEVERE DAMAGE OCCURED TO MANY SHALLOW WELLS WHICH ARE MAINSTAY SOURCE OF IRRIGATION AND DRINKING WATER ALONG THE RIVER. FURTHER GROUND INSPECTION WILL BE REQUIRED TO ASCERTAIN THE AMOUNT AND DEGREE OF IRRIGATED LAND DESTRUCTION. DUTCH PROJECT THIS AREA IN ALL LIKELIHOOD DISRUPTED CONSIDERABLY.

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PAGE 01 TUNIS 01810 02 OF 02 031844 Z

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 2 OF 2 TUNIS 1810

AIDAC FOR DISASTER RELIEF COORDINATOR

5. AGRICULTURAL DAMAGE - IT IS MUCH TOO EARLY TO ESTIMATE ACCURATELY PRODUCTION LOSSES FROM FLOODED OR HEAVILY RAIN- SATURATED FIELDS. PRELIMINARY COMPOSITE NATIONAL FIGURES ARE 100,000 HECTARES BADLY DAMAGED AND 50,000 HECTARES PARTIALLY DAMAGED. OVER- ALL CEREALS PRODUCTION, AND PARTICULARLY WHEAT, HAD IN ANY CASE BEEN EXPECTED THIS YEAR TO BE DOWN FROM THE OUTSTANDING LEVELS ACHIEVED LAST YEAR. FLOOD- RELATED DAMAGE TO THE CURRENT CROP WILL LIKELY AMPLIFY THAT REDUCTION BY SEVERAL PERCENTAGE POINTS. WEEDS, SOIL LEACHING AND WASHED AWAY NITROGEN FERTILIZER ARE THE KEY FACTORS. FIELDS IN THE PRIMARY WHEAT PRODUCING AREAS OF BOU SALEM AND JENDOUBA CONTAIN A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF STANDING WATER (30-50 PERCENT) WHICH COULD DIMINISH PRODUCTION. OTHER HIGH- YIELDING AREAS AROUND SILIANA AND LE KEF NOT SURVEYED. A MORE THOROUGH ASSESSMENT
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PAGE 02 TUNIS 01810 02 OF 02 031844 Z

OF THE CEREALS PICTURE WILL BE UNDERTAKEN WHEN GROUND MOBILITY RESTORED.

LIVESTOCK LOSSES APPEAR TO BE INSIGNIFICANT (5 PERCENT OR LESS). VERY FEW ANIMAL CARCASSES VISIBLE FROM AIR. APPARENTLY ANIMALS SUCCESSFULLY DRIVEN TO HIGHER GROUND EXCEPT IN AREAS WHERE WATER ROSE TOO RAPIDLY.

PRIMARY DAMAGE INFLOOD PLAIN AREA WAS TO ORCHARD CROPS OF OLIVES, CITRUS AND ALMONDS. OLIVE TREES GENERALLY MATURE AND SHOULD SURVIVE WHILE FRUIT AND ALMOND TREES WERE YOUNG AND PROBABLY WILL NOT RECOVER FROM UPROOTING FORCE OF FLOOD WATERS. DIFFICULT TO PROVIDE HECTARAGE FIGURES AT THIS TIME.

6. HUMAN SITUATION - RECONNAISSANCE TEAM OBSERVED FOUR (4) REFUGEE CAMPS IN OPERATION. ONE CAMP, LOCATED ON THE ONLY VISIBLY DISTRESSED ISLAND IN THE DELTA FLOOD ZONE, WAS IN THE PROCESS OF RECEIVING RELIEF SUPPLIES FROM LIBYAN HELICOPTER. OTHER CAMPS WERE OBSERVED IN BOU SALEM, BULLA REGIA, AND NEAR MANOUBA. THERE ARE ALSO REPORTS OF A SIZEABLE TENT CITY OUTSIDE OF MEDJEZ EL BAB CONTAINING 150 TENTS. PERHAPS 225 TO 250 TENTS

IN TOTAL WERE BEING UTILIZED IN OBSERVED AREAS. THERE WAS NO EVIDENCE OF LARGE, UNHOUSED CROWDS. SCHOOLS AND OTHER PUBLIC FACILITIES ARE ALSO IN USE AS REFUGEE SHELTERS FOR LARGE NUMBER OF DISPLACED PEOPLE.

7. COMMENTS AND CONCLUSIONS: SERIOUS DAMAGE OCCURRED IN THE DELTA ZONE AND THE POPULATED AREAS OF DJEDEIDA, TEBOURBA, MEDJEZ EL BAB. LESSER AMOUNTS OF DESTRUCTION OCCURRED IN THE UPPER REACHES OF THE RIVER. LAND BOUNDED BY MEANDERS WAS EXTENSIVELY OVERWASHED. SOME DAMAGE ALONG MEDJERDA RIVER TRIBUTARIES WAS NOTED. BOU SALEM, WHILE PARTIALLY INUNDATED DURING AN EARLIER PERIOD, HAS RECOVERED WITH LITTLE LASTING DAMAGE. JENDOUBA PROPER WAS NEVER SERIOUSLY THREATENED ALTHOUGH IT WAS ISOLATED FOR A WHILE. RAILROADS AND HIGHWAYS NOT CONSIDERED TO BE THE BEST BEFORE THE FLOOD HAVE HAD ANOTHER SETBACK. REPAIR WILL BE TIME CONSUMING AND EXPENSIVE. MANY INHABITANTS HAVE BEEN UPROOTED AND FORCED INTO REFUGEE STATUS. SUPPLIES APPEAR TO BE MOVING TO THE FIELD WITHOUT DIFFICULTY. AS THE WATER RECEDES, THE NUMBER OF DISPLACED PEOPLE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 TUNIS 01810 02 OF 02 031844 Z

WILL DWINDLE. THE OFFICIAL NUMBER OF CASUALTIES MIGHT RISE ABOVE THE PRESENT COUNT OF 86. PROPERTY AND AGRICULTURAL LOSSES ARE STILL TO BE ESTIMATED. EXACT FIGURES WILL NOT BE KNOWN FOR MONTHS. AT THIS MOMENT RECONNAISSANCE TEAM SEES NO JUSTIFICATION FOR LARGE OUTLAYS OF ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE. FOOD, CLOTHING, SHELTER AND MATERIAL SEEMED TO BE AVAILABLE IN SUFFICIENT QUANTITIES TO SUSTAIN RELIEF EFFORT. TO DATE NEITHER USAID NOR EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED FORMAL REQUESTS FOR ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE. IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE P. L. 480 TITLES I AND II ASSISTANCE ARE STILL TO BE EXAMINED. SEELYE

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